

Balcarras Sixth Form

2021





Teddy Holbrook

(Year 11 Balcarras)

AS: AAB

Plans: to study Geography

Throughout my time at Balcarras I have always felt comfortable, informed and understood. For me, such support is essential to progressing in my academic work, and the sixth form team and my teachers have always created a fantastic learning environment which has helped me to work to the best of my abilities. I was also attracted by the opportunity of studying 4 subjects in Year 12, and continuing with geography, economics and English Literature in Year 13. The change from Year 12 to Year 13 gave me more time to discover my interests and a broader range of knowledge to use in further education. Additionally, the completion of an extended project qualification has helped me further my geographical interests and my research into the human development and occupation of Africa, preparing me excellently for university and beyond. I have been very well supported in my application to Oxford with support preparing my personal statement and for interviews, and I really appreciate how the school has never doubted my potential to succeed. Away from the classroom, there have been so many opportunities including sixth form debates, the school magazine and annual drama productions – giving me skills I never imagined I could attain this time two years ago. I am proud to be a Balcarras student and the experiences and memories I have of the sixth form especially are some that I am sure I will never forget.



Aiden Cheal

(Year 11 Winchcombe)

AS: BCCC

Plans: to study Architecture with Environmental Engineering

Joining Balcarras 6th Form from Winchcombe School was quite daunting with new subjects, new teachers and new classmates, but the school was really welcoming right from the start. The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities which allowed new students, like me, to interact with those who had been at the school from Year 11. The music department played a key role in this as many students, myself included, were encouraged to perform and work with students already at the school in many events such as the House Music and the production of “We Will Rock You”. The early events in the year helped to break the ice as many of us found ourselves comfortably settled in within the first few weeks. The teachers are always pushing us to achieve the best grades we can which was one of the key reasons why Balcarras was my first choice. I have been supported from day one by all members of staff especially over lockdown where the communication was excellent, allowing us to continue with our education as we progressed towards A-levels. There is a great amount of respect between the pupils and the staff in the sixth form as their approach is relaxed yet professional as they drive us to achieve our potential, whilst making jokes at our expense of course. Balcarras was my first choice for sixth form and I have no regrets with my decision. It has lived up to its positive reputation and has allowed me to experience a wide range of activities whilst pushing me to achieve my academic goals.



James Pearne

(Year 11 Balcarras) AS: AAAA

Plans: to study French and Russian at Oxford

Despite keeping an offer from another Sixth Form until GCSE results day, I had enjoyed Balcarras too much in lower school to leave! For me, Balcarras has the perfect balance of both a friendly and academically challenging environment, and I have really valued the range of extra-curricular activities on offer. As a musician, I have always enjoyed the vast array of ensembles on offer, but in Sixth Form I have been able to expand my extra-curricular portfolio with a trip to New York, a French debating competition and being a barrister in a Bar Mock Trial at Bristol Crown Court. The facilities in Sixth Form are brilliant, especially the study rooms - although the thought of all of your freedoms here being supervised study periods perhaps doesn't sound like a plus, it provides a focussed, productive atmosphere to alleviate the workload at home.

At Balcarras, I have been able to push my academic limits – I trialled a fifth subject at the start of Year 12, and I have decided to continue four A-levels into Year 13 alongside an EPQ, with the full support of my teachers throughout. I study French, Russian, English Literature and history, and this combination of essay-based arts and humanities subjects is absolutely brilliant. I am particularly enjoying the coursework elements of all four of my subjects, which, alongside my EPQ, have enabled me to delve deep into topics that really interest me, such as Soviet war poetry and French philosophical satire. On top of being simply fascinating, this is excellent preparation for degree-level study. In addition, the one-to-one conversation sessions offered by the languages department are always a highlight of my week, as they are a tremendous asset in gaining not only linguistic fluency, but also cultural insight from native speakers. Finally, I know that the incredible level of support I have received from my teachers to prepare for my university applications leaves me very well prepared for life after Balcarras.



Ben Carley-Macaulay

(Year 11 Winchcombe)

AS: AAAA

Plans: to study Physics

Moving schools at the end of Year 11 seemed like a very large and difficult step at the time, coming from a much smaller school and the impending higher standard of work that A-levels entail. However, the transition to Balcarras could not have been further from my initial ideas, the community of the sixth form made settling in very seamless and within weeks I felt like a member of the community. The flexibility to study 4 subjects at AS-level was a key appeal of Balcarras which let me narrow down my wider interest in STEM to the subjects I currently study (maths, further maths and physics). This, paired with the support from approachable and passionate teachers, has both grown my drive for academia, allowed me to achieve success within school and to tutor GCSE students independently, all of which have set me up for great post-18 prospects. Thanks to the support of the sixth form team, and the assistance of the Boost program, I feel prepared for my next step, studying physics at university. The help provided by staff whilst preparing for entrance examinations made my ambition of reading physics at Oxford a possibility. Overall Balcarras has helped develop me as a person and has given me the independent skills required for success in higher education.



Welcome to Balcarras Sixth Form

A warm welcome to this guide about the courses available in the sixth form from September 2021.

We are proud of the opportunities we offer, based around an exciting range of courses, excellent teaching and an atmosphere of enjoyment and collaboration. This combination, along with outstanding results at A-level, has led Ofsted to judge that we are one of the best sixth form in the country.

In November 2020 we were named The Sunday Times Southwest State School of the Decade in recognition of our superb academic performance over many years.

It is not just in terms of raw results that the sixth form excels. Over the last three years we have achieved the highest A-level value added for any state school In Gloucestershire and nationally we are in the top 2% of providers.

As well as superb facilities for academic study, there is a wealth of extracurricular activities, along with consistent support and guidance throughout your two-year programme. We are very proud of the achievements of our sixth form students, and the contribution they make each year as Balcarras continues to strive to go from strength to strength.

I hope you will want to join us and I look forward to the contribution you can make to our success in the future.

Dominic Burke Headteacher

The sixth form is outstanding. The quality of teaching, leadership and what the school provides is exceptional. Students gain a very high standard in examinations. **OFSTED**

Welcome



Thank you very much for taking some time to read our new sixth form brochure! Your sixth form education is an exciting stage of your life and a successful and rewarding experience from 16 – 18 will unlock a world of opportunities before you. I am confident that at Balcarras you can thrive and succeed.

The quality of the teaching in the sixth form is exceptional and the experience you will have as a Year 12 and Year 13 student is, I believe, unrivalled. The exciting and positive atmosphere in our purpose-built sixth form building is tangible. The recent renovation of the sixth form common room has added an extra dimension of quality and shows the commitment the school has to its sixth formers.

We hope that you will leave the sixth form as well-rounded and highly qualified adults with a clear vision of your future intentions and pathways.

At the beginning of this journey you will choose four subjects in which you have a keen interest. This can sometimes be a difficult decision and therefore your teachers, tutors and parents are on hand to guide and advise you where necessary. You may also wish to talk to the sixth form team, Mrs Derrick, Mr Constance, Ms Taylor or me.

I cannot wait to meet you and discuss your plans and aspirations.

A stylized, handwritten signature in dark ink.

Darren Leatherbarrow Head of Sixth Form

Teachers are experts in
their subjects. **OFSTED**

CONTENTS

a supportive environment	4
the courses on offer	6
a rich experience	7
outstanding facilities	9
uniform	10
art	11
biology	12
business studies	13
chemistry	14
computer science	15
drama & theatre	16
economics	17
english literature	18
environmental science	19
food science & nutrition	20
french	23
further mathematics	24
geography	25
health & social care	26
history	27
mathematics	28
music	29
photography	30
physical education	31
physics	32
politics	33
product design	34
psychology	35
religion, philosophy and ethics	36
russian	37
spanish	38
textiles	39
extended project qualification	40
how to apply	41

A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

Sixth form team

Mr Darren Leatherbarrow, the Head of Sixth Form, Mr Constance and Mrs Derrick, the Heads of Years 12 and 13 and members of the Senior Management Team meet with each applicant before they enter the sixth form to help them to make the right choices. This gives students and parents the opportunity to discuss any questions they might have.

Throughout your time in the sixth form, Mr Leatherbarrow, Mrs Derrick and Mr Constance will be available to offer advice on your studies and your future, and to listen to your concerns. They each have an office in the Sixth Form Centre and are the normal points of contact for parents of sixth formers.



Mrs Derrick



Mr Constance

Tutors

Students will be in tutor groups. The role of the sixth form tutor is to be concerned with the welfare and academic progress of their students. Tutor groups meet as a whole, but there will also be regular individual tutorials at which your academic progress will be discussed. Tutors pay particular attention to your attendance (our expectation is 100% attendance) and will have regular feedback from your subject teachers. Students are expected not to take family holidays in school time.

A feature of Balcarras Sixth Form is our system of progress reports. In the first term you will be set target grades for each of your subjects. Progress grades are then published each term. This gives students and parents a clear and current record of academic progress.



Administrative support

Ms Lynda Taylor provides administrative support for sixth form staff and students and would be delighted to aid you in any way.



Ms Taylor

Lead Study Supervisor and Mentor

There are many friendly faces in the sixth form and Mrs Gill Dean is certainly one of them. She is the lead study supervisor for the state-of-the-art purpose-built study rooms and is often a good contact for students with many questions about sixth form life, as well as academic support for the EPQ and is a sixth form mentor.



Mrs Dean

Teachers

Your A-level teachers will probably be your most important contacts. After all, you are coming to the sixth form for academic success. They will advise you about your progress, as well as reporting regularly to your tutors and, of course, your parents. They can also be a useful source of information about careers and degree courses in your chosen area.

A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

Careers and university advice

Progression to university is the goal of most students. Towards the middle of Year 12 the futures course is dedicated to university choices and the UCAS system. In addition to this, Mr Leatherbarrow, Mrs Derrick and Mr Constance will be available to discuss applications with students. The first half-term of Year 13 is when UCAS applications are written and sent (the school deadline is 5th December – but early applications are advisable). All students use the electronic application system which makes the whole process paperless and quick.

The Oxbridge application programme plus information about grants, loans and fees will be available to parents and students – an information evening will take place in July of Year 12. The Head of Careers, Mrs Bull co-ordinates our advice service to students. This will continue to be an important support to students, and Boost coordinator Mr Niblett runs a substantial advice and preparation programme.

Reports and parents' evenings

Communication with parents is something we value. At the beginning of Year 12 an information evening is held for the parents of all new sixth form students. In addition to the 3 yearly progress reports, there is also a full written report in Year 12. There are also parents' evenings in both years, with two for Year 13. Students are expected to attend these meetings along with their parents.

The sixth form committee

There is an active sixth form committee, composed of Year 12 and Year 13 students who are elected in the autumn hustings. The committee meets every week, discussing issues affecting student welfare, uniform, accommodation, and most importantly, planning social events! Recommendations are made directly to the Head of Sixth Form and the Head of Year and changes often result.

...students gain access to the top universities or the apprenticeships of their choice. **OFSTED**



A-levels offered at Balcarras

Twenty-five A-levels are available. Information on each including A-level units, is available on pages 11 to 40.

Art

Biology

Business studies

Chemistry

Computer science

Drama and theatre

Economics

English literature

Environmental science

French

Further mathematics

Geography

History

Mathematics

Music

Photography

Physical education

Physics

Politics

Product design

Psychology

Religion, philosophy and ethics

Russian

Spanish

Textiles

We also provide vocational qualifications:

Food science & nutrition

Health and social care

THE COURSES ON OFFER

What is an A-level?

All students who apply to Balcarras are choosing to study a full suite of four A-level subjects for the entire duration of the first year. We believe that the curriculum offered at Balcarras will provide you with excellent breadth and flexibility, and enable all students to progress to preferred post-18 destination. We ask that all applicants opt for at least 4 subjects because we believe that this provides the opportunity to work out what you really want to study by the end of Year 12. Surveys have shown that up to 50% of students change their minds about the three subjects with which to continue in Year 13. Most students will drop one of their subjects at the end of Year 12 and study 3 subjects in Year 13. No student is required to continue with all 4 subjects for two years, although some may be advised to continue with all 4 subjects depending on their university course choices. We will of course offer advice to students on their choices and any thoughts they may have about further study. Should you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact the Sixth Form team.

Assessment

Each A-level course comprises of multiple units of work. These are usually assessed through examinations, coursework or a combination of the two. Internal trial examination assessments will take place in February and rigorous end of year exams will be held in June/ July of Year 12. Internal trial examination assessments will take place in January of Year 13, and the final external examination assessments will take place in May/June of Year 13.

A-level courses are challenging and are more demanding than GCSEs. All students will receive regular assessment and feedback throughout their courses to support their progression from GCSE to A-level. In all courses grades A to E will represent a pass.

Choosing your courses

When choosing your courses, you should be guided by three key factors: academic ability and aptitude; enjoyment and interest; relevance to your future career aspirations. Firstly, you should consider your academic strengths: which are your best subjects? Secondly, you should select subjects you most enjoy

studying. Thirdly, if you have a firm idea about your future career or a subject you wish to study at university, then you are strongly advised to do some careful research into which subjects are required to ensure all options remain open to you.

With four A-level courses available to you in Year 12, there is an opportunity to maintain a fairly broad curriculum. For example, you may wish to take a language alongside three science subjects, or a science subject alongside three arts and humanities subjects. Universities and employers will welcome such breadth.

Progression

Progression from Year 12 to Year 13 is not automatic. It is dependent on your progress throughout Year 12, and your examination results. If students do not gain at least a pass grade in their trial examinations in Year 12 then they may be advised not to continue that particular course to A-level and it may be that their course of study is changed.

The vast majority of students, however, following four A-level courses in Year 12 will usually progress into Year 13 to take three A-levels. Any student wishing to continue to study all four A-levels in Year 13 may do so. The decision about which course to drop, if any, will be made at the end of Year 12. This decision will be made on the basis of discussion between the students and teachers. Parents are welcome to be involved in the discussion if they so wish.

Entry requirements

The minimum requirement for entry to sixth form is two grade 6's and three grade 5's to include mathematics and English. Please refer to the Balcarras website for full details.

Many subjects will require a grade 6 in that particular subject at GCSE. Details can be found on the relevant subject page.

Each year, many students apply from schools other than Balcarras. The benefits they bring to the sixth form, both socially and academically, are valued immensely. However, we are only able to accommodate a maximum of 50 external students.

In the event that more than 50 wish to take up a place in Year 12, students will be allocated places based on the over-subscription criteria set out on the school's website.

A RICH EXPERIENCE

Alongside your academic subjects there will be a number of other courses on your timetable:

Futures

This course offers a number of elements:

- Preparation for higher education: choosing the right course, UCAS applications, money management, getting accommodation
- Alternatives to higher education
- Starting a career, taking a gap year
- Study skills and tips for achieving success at A-level, including note taking, essay writing and time management

Guest speakers

The whole of Year 12 comes together once a fortnight to listen to a variety of interesting and informative guest speakers. Recent topics have included gap years, careers in film making, university finances, volunteering in Gloucestershire, safe driving and many others.

Extended Project Qualification

The Extended Project is a Level 3 qualification and is intended to stretch and challenge students beyond their A-level choices; it is therefore highly regarded by universities and employers alike. The EPQ allows each student to embark on a self-motivated and largely independent project. The students have freedom of choice over their project's title, subject to approval by the course coordinators, and the direction of its completion; our students find this highly rewarding.

See page 40 for further details about EPQ.

Very few students leave at the end of Year 12. **OFSTED**





Sixth form games

Every Wednesday afternoon all Year 12 students take part in a sporting activity. This is a compulsory part of the curriculum and the aim is for every student to do some form of physical exercise which they enjoy. Each student selects from a wide range of activities, which varies from term to term. A number of competitive options are available including netball, hockey, football and rugby. Fitness training or inter-school fixtures also take place during this time. More recreational options (both onsite and offsite) have included body conditioning, the use of the fitness suite, yoga, dodgeball, golf and badminton.

Extracurricular activities

Students participate in a wide range of extracurricular activities including: The Duke of Edinburgh Award, Young Enterprise, the paired reading scheme, Engage discussion forums, Bar Mock Trial, World Challenge, Model United Nations General Assembly, debating, school music competitions, drama productions, inter-school sports matches and regular intra-tutor competitions.

The Duke of Edinburgh Award (DofE)

The DofE at Balcarras is thriving. The sixth form are invited to join at Gold level (no previous levels are required if this has not been done before). The Gold Award involves a physical recreation, skill, residential and volunteering section as well as a 4 day expedition. Meetings are held regularly to encourage students to gain their award whilst at Balcarras and to provide support and encouragement. The expedition training is undertaken in school time with the expeditions running in-house in the summer between Year 12 and 13 to the Peak District and Dartmoor. Pupils can use participation in other activities such as paired reading, paired maths mentoring and their extra-curricular games towards their DofE sections.

Students' confidence in knowing exactly where they are in their learning encourages students to ask questions of teachers rather than wait until questioned. **OFSTED**

Young Enterprise

The success of the Young Enterprise scheme at Balcarras has been exceptional. Students have formed their own companies, producing and selling a range of goods and services in recent years. Each business is judged on its trading activities, the quality of production and a financial report at the end of the year. As a team we have finished in the top two within Gloucestershire for the past ten years, winning the last four years in a row. We have also represented the county at the South West final on no less than four occasions. There are over 2,000 schools that participate in the UK each year and our greatest successes include Balcarras winning the national award with our Vitamin Boom team who produced a range of herbal tea products, and in the last two years securing prizes in the national finals for our team Sustain's environmentally-themed children's activity book, and our Memento team's therapy game to support people suffering from dementia. The Business department works hard and liaises with local businesses to ensure that participating students were motivated and well supported in every aspect of creating and running their business.

The paired reading scheme

Year 12 students are invited to take part in the paired reading scheme run by the learning support and English departments. Students are given training by the learning support department and then paired with a Year 7 or Year 8 pupil. The student and the pupil arrange times to meet and the sixth former helps the pupil with reading and literacy. This proves to be extremely rewarding for both.

Private study

Developing good study habits is the most effective way to academic success in the sixth form. Most students will have about one hour a day private study time. Both Year 12 and Year 13 students have purpose-built, fully supervised private study facilities, which are equipped with ICT workstations. In Year 13, once good habits have been developed, students have greater discretion in how they use this time. We see the effective running of the private study system as being the key to maximising academic success. All students who wish to apply to Balcarras Sixth Form must be committed to using study time effectively.

OUTSTANDING FACILITIES

The sixth form is based in its own purpose-built centre. The facilities are outstanding – with science laboratories for sixth form courses, as well as the information technology and business suites. There is a superb high spec drama studio and a total of twelve classrooms. Much of the sixth form teaching takes place in the block - though some subjects like art and design technology take place in other parts of the school, taking advantage of specialist facilities.


Sixth form tutor groups are based in or close to the sixth form block.

We firmly believe that our supervised study facilities, which are open to students both before school from 08:00, and after school until 18:00, play a crucial role in the success of the sixth form.

There is no doubt they help our students develop effective study routines, that it facilitates the academic progress our students make, and enhances the vibrant sixth form community we enjoy.

There are two large study areas, with over 120 computer terminals and study carrels at which you can work. These are used for supervised private study in both Year 12 and Year 13.

The recently upgraded common room provides a superb space in which students can socialise. It is well equipped for use by students at break and lunch, including a music system and vending machines. There are facilities for students to make their own refreshments including a kettle and microwaves. There is also a wide variety of food served to sixth formers in the common room at break and lunchtimes.



The sixth form ... has standards that are among the highest in the country. **OFSTED**

UNIFORM

The idea

The uniform, decided by consensus between staff, students, parents and governors, allows flexibility. The dress code is distinctive from that of the lower school. Sixth form students are expected to be smartly dressed at all times and act as role models for the younger pupils at the school.

The design

A number of sixth formers were involved in agreeing the design. A feature is the sixth form logo - which appears on the polo shirts, jumpers and cardigans.

The uniform

- Black or brown formal shoes
- Smart black or grey trousers or smart black or grey skirt
- Balcarras Sixth Form polo shirt - red, ash grey, or royal blue
- Balcarras Sixth Form Jumper in black or grey or Balcarras Sixth Form Cardigan in black
- Belts should be black, grey or brown

Training shoes, boots, scarves, jackets or coats may not be worn in the sixth form. Jewellery, hair colour and make-up should be subtle.

Students should see their Head of Year if they are unsure about any item.

Buying uniform

The polo shirts, sweatshirts and cardigans are available from "The Schoolwear Company" or gently worn from the sixth form office.



ART

Syllabus title:

Art (Fine art)

Examination board:

AQA

A-level

Unit 1	Portfolio unit supported by 1,000-3,000 words	60% of A-level
Unit 2	Practical examination 15 hrs	40% of A-level

Studying A-level art

The course is sympathetic with the structure of GCSE art. It revolves around units of coursework and controlled tests set against four assessment objectives. As with GCSE art, much of the practical work is triggered by critical studies with written research acting as a diary of work undertaken. Students can work in a range of media including painting, mixed media, printmaking and sculpture. All work will be internally marked, and then moderated by AQA. The controlled test in Year 12 should be seen as an opportunity for developing ideas and in Year 13 to develop a more fully realised project.

Entry requirements

Students should have achieved a grade 6 in GCSE art. Students must demonstrate some proficiency in their use of written English, especially helpful at A-level. Consideration can be given to students who achieve a level 5 at GCSE depending on their portfolio.

BIOLOGY

Syllabus title:
Biology

Examination board:
AQA

A-level

Paper 1	Covers topics 1-4	2 hrs	35% of total marks
Paper 2	Topics 5-8	2 hrs	35% of total marks
Paper 3	Topics 1-8 and the relevant practical skills	2 hrs	30% of total marks

Studying A-level biology

We deliver the AQA biology syllabus. It is an ideal course for students who really enjoy biology and want to explore all the different facets of the subject.

Biology at A-level is stimulating, demanding and challenging. We cover many different topics from human disease, to animal physiology, plant physiology, new gene technologies and the biochemistry of cells and processes. Prospective students will need to be good at applying knowledge and understanding to novel situations whilst displaying a high level of literacy and numeracy – at least 10% of the marks at A-level will come from the use of maths skills taught in higher tier GCSE maths. Students will also complete a series of set practicals chosen by AQA. The skills developed in this course have enabled past students to successfully follow higher education courses in medicine, midwifery, veterinary sciences, zoology, biology, biochemistry, marine biology, forestry and ecology.

8 topics are covered at A-level:

- 1 - Biological molecules
- 2 - Cells
- 3 - Organisms exchange substances with their environment
- 4 - Genetic information, variation and relationships between organisms
- 5 - Energy transfers in and between organisms
- 6 - Organisms respond to changes in their internal and external environments
- 7 - Genetics, populations, evolution and ecosystems
- 8 - The control of gene expression

A field day is also organised for the September of Year 13. All students studying the full biology A-level must attend this trip as it covers important aspects of topic 5 and 7 as well as a required practical.

Entry requirements

Students wishing to take biology should have a grade 6 or above in biology or combined science and a grade 6 in maths.

BUSINESS STUDIES

Syllabus title:

Business studies

Examination board:

AQA

A-level

Paper 1	Business 1: Strategic Decisions	2 hrs	33.3% of A-level
Paper 2	Business 2: Managing Strategic Change	2 hrs	33.3% of A-level
Paper 3	Business 3: Business in Context	2 hrs	33.3% of A-level

Studying A-level business

The course is an excellent overview of the different skills needed in a business environment. It introduces key theories and then tests them in a real world situation. The emphasis of the course is on the relevance of business theory to businesses in practice. Students will learn a variety of decision-making techniques and apply these in examination conditions.

The course also places an emphasis on developing entrepreneurship skills and giving students the confidence to set up and run their own company in the future. This is a major government initiative and all students in business are encouraged to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of different business operations.

Entry requirements

Successful A-level business students need to have good communication skills and be confident using numbers.

Students do not need to have studied business studies at GCSE-level.



CHEMISTRY

Syllabus title:

Chemistry A

Examination board:

OCR

A-level

Paper 1	Periodic Table, Elements and Physical Chemistry	100 marks and is split into two sections and assesses content from teaching modules 1, 2, 3 and 5	2¼ hrs	37% of total A-level
Paper 2	Synthesis and Analytical Techniques	100 marks and is split into two sections and assesses content from teaching modules 1, 2, 4 and 6	2¼ hrs	37% of total A-level
Unit 3	Unified Chemistry	70 marks across all teaching modules 1 to 6	1½ hrs	26% of total A-level

Studying A-level chemistry

Chemistry develops experimental skills and increases a student's ability to handle, apply and evaluate information as well as extend their knowledge and understanding of scientific theories and applications. The students will discover how and why the atoms and molecules that make up every chemical react and behave. This enables students to have a greater awareness of the way the material world works. Chemistry will be a stimulating, highly academic challenge as well as a course full of exciting and varied activity. It is worth noting that chemistry is essential for students wishing to pursue a career in medicine, veterinary science, dentistry or pharmacy.

The Year 12 course is divided into four teaching modules.

Module 1 – Development of practical skills in chemistry

Module 2 – Foundations in chemistry

Module 3 – Periodic table and energy

Module 4 – Core organic chemistry



In Year 12 learners study modules 1 to 4 and continue with modules 5 and 6 in Year 13. The internally assessed Practical Endorsement skills also form part of the full A-level.

Module 5 – Physical chemistry and transition elements

Module 6 – Organic chemistry and analysis

Within A-level chemistry, 20% of the marks available within written examinations will be for assessment of mathematics.

Entry requirements

Students wishing to take chemistry should have a grade 6 or above in chemistry or combined science and a grade 6 in maths.

COMPUTER SCIENCE

Syllabus title:

Computer Science

Examination board:

OCR

A-level

Unit 1	Computer Systems	2½ hrs written paper	140 marks	40% of total A-level
Unit 2	Algorithms and Programming	2½ hrs written paper	140 marks	40% of total A-level
Unit 3	Programming Project	Non exam assessment	70 marks	20% of total A-level

Studying A-level computer science

Computer science is a challenging subject that asks students to think in a computational way. There is an emphasis on abstract thinking, problem solving and reasoning using analytical, logical and creative skills.

The course itself is very demanding and covers computing fundamentals, looking in depth at computer architecture, programming and internet technologies.

It is an excellent way to prepare for degree-level study in areas such as computer science, programming, software and systems design or engineering. It is also effective as career entry and industry preparation.

Entry requirements

For students wishing to take computer science, a minimum grade 6 in GCSE mathematics and a 6 in GCSE computer science (or equivalent) are both essential. All applications will be considered on an individual basis.

DRAMA & THEATRE

Syllabus title:

Drama & Theatre

Examination board:

Edexcel

A-level

Component 1	Devising	40% NEA (coursework based)	Students devise a piece of theatre which they then perform. They record and reflect upon their work in a portfolio.	Internally assessed and externally moderated.
Component 2	Text in Performance	20%	Students produce a group performance from a play influenced by study of an established practitioner. They also present a separate performance of a monologue or duologue.	Assessed by a visiting examiner.
Component 3	Theatre Makers in Practice	40% Written exam	Based on theatre visits, practical and theoretical study. This paper comprises 3 sections covering live theatre and questions on two set texts.	Exam 2 hours 30 mins.

Studying A-level drama and theatre

This course allows students plenty of opportunities to combine practical and academic approaches. Students will study set texts and the work of several practitioners. Skills and insights will be developed through individual study and group projects, performing scripted pieces and producing original work. Please note that there is a requirement to attend professional theatre productions and workshops, some of which will probably be in the evening.

To be a high achiever in drama, candidates are expected to work co-operatively and sensitively with others. Students should also be able to give up significant

time outside school hours, and to have a genuine interest in drama. A willingness to experiment with new ideas and a sense of fun are also very important.

Entry requirements

It is not necessary for students to have studied GCSE drama to take A-level drama and theatre, although the course does revisit and build upon skills gained at KS4. Students should have achieved a grade 5 in English GCSE. If they have studied GCSE or IGCSE Drama then a minimum C grade or grade 5 is also expected here. However, at least as important as these requirements are genuine commitment and self-motivation.

ECONOMICS

Syllabus title:
Economics

Examination board:
AQA

A-level

Paper 1	Markets and Market Failure	2 hrs	33.3% of A-level
Paper 2	The National & International Economy	2 hrs	33.3% of A-level
Paper 3	Economic Principles and Issues	2 hrs	33.3% of A-level

Studying A-level economics

Economics A-level provides a very good grounding in economic and strategic thinking which will provide students with a solid foundation in economic awareness and understanding. The course encourages students to develop an understanding of economic concepts and theories through a critical consideration of current economic issues. It also expects students to apply economic concepts and theories in a range of contexts and to appreciate their values and limitations in explaining real-world phenomena.

Note: Many universities require students applying for an economics degree to have gained an A-level in mathematics or further mathematics.

Entry requirements

Successful A-level economics students need to have good communication skills and be confident using numbers. Consequently, a GCSE grade 6 in either English Language or English Literature and mathematics are necessary.

Students do not need to have studied business studies or economics at GCSE-level.

ENGLISH LITERATURE

Syllabus title:

English Literature

Examination board:

Edexcel

A-level

Component 1:	Drama*	2 Hours and 15 Minutes	30%
	Section A: Shakespeare (Either King Lear, Hamlet or Othello) Section B: A Streetcar Named Desire (Tennessee Williams)		
Component 2:	Prose*	1 Hour and 15 Minutes	20%
	Students write one essay comparing the novels Frankenstein by Mary Shelley and The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood		
Component 3:	Poetry*	2 Hours and 15 Minutes	30%
	Section A: Poetry post-2000 (plus comparison with unseen poem) Section B: Poetry pre-1900		
Component 4:	Coursework		20%
	Students will write a coursework essay comparing two thematically linked texts of their choice (either prose, poetry, drama or literary non-fiction).		

*All exams are open book which means that clean copies of the texts (texts with no notes on) can be taken into the exam.

Studying A-level English Literature

If you have enjoyed English at GCSE, then you will love A-level English Literature. A-level English is the perfect opportunity to sit and discuss books with other like-minded students and to be guided in your discussions by dedicated teachers who remember clearly how exciting it was to be learning about these things for the first time. No-one ever forgets their A-level texts as the characters and themes will stay with you forever.

Lessons will be structured in a variety of ways. Sometimes your teacher will tell you things about the text, about the context behind it or about the range of different approaches that critics have taken on it. At times they will want you to work in groups to share and present your opinions and at others they will ask you to explore your own ideas individually in a detailed essay. The best lessons are those where students discuss, reflect and challenge and as the course goes on, become increasingly independent.

This is a challenging, modern and academic course which is extremely well regarded by universities and employers. A facilitating course, A-level English will broaden the range of degree courses that you will be able to apply for. The qualification demonstrates that you are a skilled reader and an adept writer with the ability to evaluate an opinion, the skills to argue a viewpoint and the imagination to empathise with another's situation. As such it is a highly valued A-level for professions such as law, journalism, media, theatre and business.

Entry requirements

English Literature A-level will stretch you both critically and creatively, but to get the most out of the course students must have a genuine love of both reading and writing. Entrance on to the course requires a minimum of at least a grade 6 in either English Language or English Literature, but preferably in both.



ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE

Syllabus title:

A-level Environmental Science

Examination board:

AQA

A-level

Paper 1	3 hrs written paper	50%
Paper 2	3 hrs written paper	50%

Studying A-level environmental science

Students who enjoy a multi-disciplinary approach to learning and have a keen interest in the sustainability of our planet will find this course engaging and thought provoking. Environmental science is a holistic subject with many interconnected systems and processes. A change to one process can affect many other processes over different spatial and temporal scales. Consideration of environmental issues and the conclusions reached should be based on reliable evidence-based information and quantitative data. Students will develop an understanding of how human society relies upon natural systems for resources and life support systems.

What will I study?

1. The physical environment
2. Energy resources
3. Pollution
4. The Living environment
5. Biological resources
6. Sustainability
7. Research methods

Learners will study all modules.

Students will be expected to draw on knowledge and understanding of the entire course of study to show a deeper understanding of the interconnections between topics.

Questions will be a combination of multiple choice, short answer and extended writing questions.

Career Opportunities:

- Environmental Consultant
- Marine Biologist
- Sustainability Consultant
- Environmental Manager
- Recycling Officer
- Waste Management Officer

Entry requirements

GCSE grade 5 in maths and English and grade 5-5 in combined science or grade 5 in biology and chemistry in triple science.

FOOD SCIENCE & NUTRITION

Syllabus title:

Food Science & Nutrition

Examination board:

WJEC



Year 12 Certificate in Food Science and Nutrition

Unit Number	Unit Title	Assessment
1	Meeting Nutritional Needs of Specific Groups	Internal : practical and written assessment External : 1 ½ hour written exam

Year 13 Diploma in Food Science and Nutrition

2	Ensuring Food is Safe to Eat	Externally marked - eight hour timed, supervised assessment
3	Experimenting to Solve Food Production Problems	Internal: responding through investigative and experimental work to a scenario based on a food production problem

Studying food science and nutrition

An understanding of food science and nutrition is relevant to many industries and job roles. Care providers and nutritionists in hospitals use this knowledge, as do sports coaches and fitness instructors. Hotels and restaurants, food manufacturers and government agencies also use this understanding to develop menus, food products and policies that support healthy eating initiatives.

The WJEC Level 3 Food Science and Nutrition qualification allows pupils to gain a wealth of knowledge about the food and nutrition industry. Students will have the opportunity to learn about the relationship between the human body and food as well as practical skills for cooking and preparing food. It has been designed to provide pupils with knowledge, understanding and skills to progress to further study and training. It is assessed through a combination of coursework, written examinations and timed extended assignments.

Entry requirements

Pupils must have studied GCSE Food Preparation and Nutrition and have obtained a minimum grade 5 or GCSE design technology subject (product design or textiles) and have obtained a minimum grade 6. Sound ICT skills would also be advantageous. If you are considering a long-term career, a science-based subject may also be beneficial.



Charlotte Claydon

(Year 11 Balcarras)

AS: ABCC

Plans: to study for a combined honours degree in Fine Art and History of Art

I have been a student at Balcarras since Year 7 and I really couldn't imagine studying anywhere else. It has such a supportive and welcoming environment and has become like a family to me. Progressing on to the sixth form was my natural choice. This, together with the fact that Balcarras has the reputation for achieving excellent results, made this a 'no-brainer'! I arrived in the sixth form full of confidence and hope that this would be my stepping stone to university. With the unwavering help, support and encouragement of my teachers, I'm very hopeful that this will be the case. Art has always been my passion and I have been emboldened by my art teachers to apply to the most prestigious fine art degree programmes in the country where I will gain the best possible range of techniques and opportunities for the future.



Karissa Patel

(Year 11 Balcarras)

AS: AABB

Plans: Degree apprenticeship in Business and Marketing

As I thoroughly enjoyed my time during Years 7-11 at Balcarras, I knew that I wanted to join Balcarras sixth form; I did not consider any other places to study my A-levels. The transition from Year 11 was seamless. The school has provided a great working and social environment, and this has continued through to sixth form, not to mention the support provided by teachers which is exceptional.

Being able to study four AS-levels, allowed me to experience a range of subjects that would give me a chance to learn more transferable skills which will help me in the future, especially in the competitive environment of a degree apprenticeships. Balcarras have a variety of extracurricular activities and my favourite is Young Enterprise. Being part of this gave me insight into the business world and let my team, Momento, create a product to help people with dementia - this experience was invaluable. Our team got to the finals in London and we won the Pursuit of Opportunity award.

The work ethic is strong and the opportunity for independent study is vast, encouraging independence and responsibility which are invaluable skills for higher education. I believe Balcarras School has helped me grow, not only as an academic student, but also as an individual, by giving me guidance and raising my confidence in preparation for my next stage of a degree apprenticeship.



Kate O'Toole

(Year 11 Balcarras)

AS: AAAA

Plans: To study Economics at the University of Exeter

Although I looked at other sixth forms, none of them compared to Balcarras. I really enjoyed my five years in lower school, where I was provided with an excellent education and plenty of opportunities. The school has a real sense of community with amazing teachers and motivated students. At A-level I chose economics, geography and maths as my three subjects and all my teachers have been great, encouraging an interest in each subject beyond the curriculum. They also made the jump between GCSEs and A-levels as seamless as possible and have been really supportive throughout the whole application process for UCAS. There are plenty of extracurricular activities to get involved in. I have really enjoyed participating in gold DofE, the school netball team and ski trips. I would not hesitate to recommend Balcarras as a sixth form.



Alexi McNair

(Year 11 Bournside)

AS: AAAA

Plans: to study Maths at Cambridge; also applying to universities in the United States

When I joined Balcarras in Year 12, I was unsure which path I wanted to take after sixth form and began with five subjects at AS-level. Staff and students were all very encouraging with this endeavour and, although it was certainly a challenge, I definitely feel that it was the right choice for me. The supportive nature of Balcarras' community, combined with the passion of the teachers for their subjects, truly allowed me to reach my full potential in the first year both academically and also with regards to my extra-curricular activities, such as the school production and the sixth form debates. Going into Year 13, I was certainly more focused on the STEM subjects, studying maths, further maths and physics at A-level. I have been very set on studying mathematics at university and all staff are very helpful with support in my university applications, especially since I will be applying to universities in the United States with a very different application system. I feel that Balcarras Sixth Form has been an excellent foundation to build on post-18, giving me a sense of confidence, independence and assertiveness which will be useful throughout university and life beyond that.



Stella Stephens

(Year 11 Cirencester Kingshill School)

AS: AAAB

Plans: to study Drama at university

When deciding which sixth form to go to after secondary school, Balcarras was the clear choice due to the excellent facilities, high standard of courses, and welcoming environment. Meeting completely new people after secondary school was definitely challenging, but through putting myself out there through events such as House Music and the school production, I met likeminded people that I can now call some of the closest friends I have ever had. I chose drama, English Literature, and philosophy and ethics for A-level, as well as doing music AS-level. The workload was obviously a lot to handle, but luckily I felt incredibly supported by the teachers and my friends were able to guide me whenever I felt lost. My time in sixth form has flown by so quickly and I am incredibly grateful for the opportunities I have been given here. My current plan is to go to university to study drama BA, and all of my A-level subjects have proven to be useful when applying. Whilst I am looking forward to what happens in the future, it's safe to say I won't forget my time at Balcarras sixth form.



Alex Lannon

(Year 11 Balcarras)

AS: ABBD

Plans: to study Product Design at university

I attended Balcarras from Year 7 and felt no need to move after completing my GCSE's. The teachers here are extremely helpful and will always make time for you if you need any help with a homework or just understanding a concept. I have been pushed by my teachers to achieve as high as possible and it has really paid off. The way the curriculum is planned helps you remember but most importantly understand in time for your exams. I feel that the way my teachers have taught the subjects have given me a deeper understanding in subjects that I am passionate about.

I really feel that doing 4 subjects in Year 12 helped me as it kept me busy and kept my options open in case I did want to change where I wanted to head in the future. I studied photography in my first year and it helped me with my university applications as the courses I want to study really value a creative subject. Doing that fourth subject allowed me to choose a more creative subject and keep my curriculum as vast as possible.

I looking to go forward and study product design engineering at university and my teachers have really helped with the application process as they have highlighted things that I need to look for when applying. Overall, I feel that Balcarras is a great option for all students doing any variety of subjects.



Molly Chin

(Year 11 Cirencester Kingshill School)

AS: AAAA

Plans: to study Medicine at university

I joined Balcarras because I felt the structure, support and high standard of teaching would enable me to reach my full academic potential. I find the regular study sessions very useful to keep up to date with work and also revise content for exams. I found balancing four AS-levels and an EPQ challenging but the support from teachers, especially in chemistry, made the large quantity of work manageable. Studying four subjects in Year 12 allowed me to explore a variety of post 18 options and kept many paths open for me to make a choice based on which I enjoyed most. When I first joined the sixth form, I thought I knew what I wanted to do afterwards, however this changed after studying and achieving at the school. My grades and the quality of teaching and support from staff gave me confidence that I could go on to study a more challenging degree. Although my time at Balcarras has been shorter than usual due to lockdown, I feel prepared to go onto university as the school have equipped me with the information I need to make an informed decision about what I want to study and how I can succeed once I leave the sixth form.



Alex Veal

(Year 11 Balcarras)

AS Results AAAA

Plans: to study Design Engineering at university

Since joining the school in Year 7, I have grown accustomed to the high standard of teaching and support on offer to students, so returning to Balcarras Sixth Form was a no brainer. What stands out for me in particular, is the staff's dedication to assisting pupils in achieving their goals. From homework help drop-ins, to late sessions after school in the DT department finishing project work in time for the deadline, I can rely on my teachers to help me get the most out of my time here.

As my main subject area, the DT department is somewhere I like to spend a lot of time, with an exclusive sixth form area which has provided me with a great space to work productively in study periods. Access to a range of current equipment, including numerous 3d printers, as well as assistance from my teachers facilitates my often-ambitious projects, enabling me to do what I enjoy most.

Both in and out of lesson time, I have had the opportunity to get involved in numerous engaging activities. In Year 12, I seized the opportunity to become a member of Balcarras' Young Enterprise team, working hard as Operations Manager to oversee the design and development of our product. I gained a first-hand insight into industry practises, corresponding with professionals and working beyond the confines of the curriculum in a real business environment. In reaching the UK final - with our team receiving a sponsor award - I have seen a genuine improvement in my communication, leadership and team-work.

Already, the skills and methods I have developed here have come to fruition in assisting me in bridging the gap between education and the professional world, preparing me for life beyond school.

FRENCH

Syllabus title:

French A Level

Examination board:

AQA

A-level

Paper 1	Listening, Reading & Writing	50% of A-level
Paper 2	Writing	20% of A-level
Paper 3	Speaking	30% of A-level

Studying A-level French

A-level French builds upon the skills of listening, reading, writing and speaking which you have developed during your GCSE course. It will also extend your knowledge and understanding of France and other French speaking countries in the world, French life and culture.

In addition a good grasp of grammatical concepts will become increasingly important as you learn how the language works in order to produce accurate written and spoken French.

We use a range of up-to-date sources such as the internet, radio and television. Students will also be encouraged to make use of such resources independently. You will learn how to use French in everyday conversation as well as in formal discussion and debate. A French assistant is employed so that students can have one-to-one speaking sessions for half an hour per week. These sessions are obligatory and form an important part of the course. You will gain a clearer insight into how language works and you will also have the opportunity to visit France and to take part in theatre visits and other cultural activities.

The course will interest students who are curious about life in other countries and want to equip themselves with the language skills that are increasingly valued in the global market.

Entry requirements

Students should have achieved at least a grade 6 at GCSE-level in French.

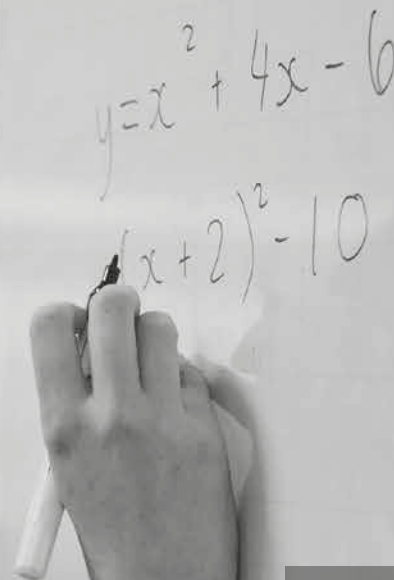
FURTHER MATHEMATICS

Syllabus title:

Further mathematics

Examination board:

Edexcel



A student is writing mathematical equations on a whiteboard. The equations are $y = x^2 + 4x - 6$ and $(x+2)^2 - 10$.

A-level

Paper 1	Core Pure Mathematics 1	1½ hrs	25% of A-level
Paper 2	Core Pure Mathematics 2	1½ hrs	25% of A-level
Paper 3	Further Statistics	1½ hrs	25% of A-level
Paper 4	Further Mechanics	1½ hrs	25% of A-level

Studying A-level further mathematics

Further mathematics would suit good mathematicians wishing to broaden their mathematics repertoire – further pure, further statistics and further mechanics being on offer, complementing the pure and applied offered in single maths. Students wishing to study engineering, physics or mathematics at university ought to consider this option very carefully. You may choose further maths as either a fourth or fifth A-level subject.

Entry requirements

Students should have achieved a grade 8 at GCSE-level in mathematics. Students who have taken AO mathematics or any other further GCSE qualification would be well suited to this course but this is not essential. Students choosing further maths must also choose maths as one of their other A-level subjects.

GEOGRAPHY

Syllabus title:
Geography

Examination board:
AQA

A-level

Component 1	Physical Geography	2 ½ hours	96 marks	40% of A-level
Component 2	Human Geography	2 ½ hours	96 marks	40% of A-level
Component 3	Geographical Investigation	3,000–4,000 words	35 marks	20% of A-level

Studying A-level geography

"There has never been a better or more important time to study geography. With growing interest in issues such as climate change, migration, environmental degradation and social cohesion, geography is one of the most relevant courses you could choose to study. Geographers are also highly employable. Whatever your passion for the world - fascination with landscapes or concerns about inequality - geography will provide you with knowledge and transferable skills that will reward you personally and advance you professionally." Dr Rita Gardner, Director of the RGS-IBG.

Through the subject we aim to develop an appreciation of the dynamic nature of geography with an interactive approach that examines the relationship between people and their environments. Equal importance is placed upon physical and human contexts, with an awareness of environmental issues and the application of geographical and fieldwork skills. Geography involves a variety of IT, field and laboratory analytical approaches including mastering techniques such as Geographical Information Systems (GIS). All of these skills are an integral part of the course. Prospective students should have an enquiring mind about landscapes and

the world around them whilst displaying a high level of literacy and numeracy.

There will be a variety of field day visits throughout the course to ensure that pupils can apply their learning and have the opportunity to experience data collection methods in preparation for the geographical investigation. A weekend residential to Dorset is an integral part of the A-level experience.

The department also runs a biennial residential trip; past destinations have included Iceland, North America and Italy. Each year the department has a range of successful students who decide to go on to study geography at a higher level. The skills from the course have enabled students to successfully study courses from oceanography, geology, geography, natural sciences, international development and urban planning.

A subscription to 'Geographical' magazine is recommended to supplement students' learning during the course, and we also encourage students to regularly read from wider sources in order to support their studies (full reading lists will be provided).

Entry requirements

Students will need to achieve a grade 6 at full course GCSE-level in geography.

HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE

Syllabus title:

OCR Level 3 Cambridge Technical Extended Certificate in Health and Social Care (equivalent to one A-level in Health and Social Care)

OCR Level 3 Cambridge Technical Diploma in Health and Social Care (equivalent to two A-levels in Health and Social Care)

This qualification will provide learners with the opportunity, through applied learning, to develop the core specialist knowledge, skills and understanding required in the health and social care sector. Learners will take units which provide the breadth of knowledge, understanding and skills to prepare them to study in a Higher Education Institution either on a health and social care-related degree course or to support an application for a range of other degree courses.

By the end of the two year course learners will have studied:

- Building positive relationships in health and social care
- Equality, diversity and rights in health and social care
- Health, safety and security in health and social care
- Anatomy and physiology for health and social care

Learners will also study two optional coursework units which will be decided by learners in Year 13.

This qualification is for learners who want to gain a deeper understanding of the industry. It allows learners a greater opportunity to complete coursework units as 46% of the final grade is made up of coursework marks. In addition to the units listed above learners studying the Technical Diploma will also take the following units:

- Infection control
- Personalisation and person-centred approach to care
- Safeguarding

Learners on this course will also study five optional coursework units over the two year course.

Entry requirements

Students do not need to have studied health and social care in Key Stage 4.



HISTORY

Syllabus title:

History

Examination board:

AQA

A-level

Unit 1	Revolution and the People: Britain, 1783-1885	2½ hours	40%
Unit 2	The American Dream: Reality and Illusion, 1945-1980	2½ hours	40%
Unit 3	Historical Investigation	Non-exam assessment	20%

Studying A-level history

A-level history is a diverse course which allows students to study both British and world history. Small parts of our studies should be familiar to students from GCSE but there is plenty of new material to get stuck into! Unit 1 focuses on British history in the 18th and 19th century and looks at the great social, political and economic changes of that time period. Britain went through a massive transformation that led to it being the most powerful country in the world. Our course seeks to explore those changes in detail over the course of a 100-year period.

In unit 2 we turn our attention to a depth study in American history. The USA often boasts that it is the “land of the free”; however there has been a long history of prejudice and discrimination. Our study looks at the developments under several Presidents in the second half of the 20th century.

Finally unit 3 involves an independent investigation that consists of a 3,500-4,500 word essay which looks at a historical question in the context of a 100-year period. This is an exciting new development in A-level history and gives plenty of opportunity for independent research and original thinking. The investigation element will allow students to pick a topic from a range of options in the second year.

Entry requirements

It is expected that A-level students will have achieved a grade 6 in history or better at GCSE-level. Students who have not studied GCSE history before are also welcome but we would expect them to have achieved a grade 6 minimum in English.

MATHEMATICS

Syllabus title:
Mathematics

Examination board:
Edexcel



A-level

Paper 1	Pure Mathematics	2 hrs	33.3% of A-level
Paper 2	Pure Mathematics	2 hrs	33.3% of A-level
Paper 3	Statistics and Mechanics	2 hrs	33.3% of A-level

Studying A-level mathematics

Mathematics at A-level is a course worth studying in its own right as well as serving as useful support for many other subjects. It is challenging but interesting and is a sought-after qualification for courses in higher education and for a variety of careers. The material builds on work that you will have met at GCSE but also involves new ideas that some of the greatest minds of the millennium have produced. Mathematics is a two year course consisting of pure mathematics (2/3) and applied mathematics (1/3). The pure mathematics builds on the algebra and problem solving from GCSE. Statistics allows students to analyse data and interpret probabilities. Mechanics is a branch of mathematics that deals with forces and motion. All students study both statistics and mechanics.

Entry requirements

Students must have achieved a grade 7 at GCSE-level in mathematics. An understanding and an enjoyment of algebra together with a neat, detailed and methodical style of working is a good indication of likely success at advanced level.

MUSIC

Syllabus title:

Music

Examination board:

WJEC Eduqas

A-level

Component 1 Performing	Option A: Minimum three pieces; 10-12 minutes total length	35%
	Option B: Minimum two pieces; 6-8 minutes total length	25%
Component 2 Composing	Option A: Two pieces; 4-6 minutes total length	25%
	Option B: Three pieces; 8-10 minutes total length	35%
Component 3 Appraising	Exam: 2hrs 15	40%

Studying A-level music

The music A-level course is an exciting and challenging balance of theory and practice, allowing individual students to develop all aspects of musicianship through appraising, performing and composing. The appraising is taught through three areas of study. The first area of study is The Western Classical Tradition and includes one set work (Symphony No.104 in D major, 'London' by Haydn). The second area of study will be decided by staff at the beginning of the course and will be from a rock and pop, musical theatre or jazz genre. The third area of study will be based on twentieth century music and will include two set works. Appraising is assessed through a written examination that will include set work analysis with a score, comparison questions, questions on unprepared extracts of music with and without the score and extended response questions. Performing and composing are both non-exam components.

With a music A-level, students can progress in to further education, higher education or employment. Music can be studied at many colleges and universities including highly acclaimed music colleges such as The Birmingham Conservatoire and The Royal Academy of Music. However, music A-level is highly regarded by all colleges and universities even for students wanting to follow a non-music course. Career pathways are wide and varied and include music teaching, whether instrumental or classroom based, sound-engineer, choreography, music publishing, backing singing, classical music, arts administration, television and radio production, stage or screen work, radio presenting, music journalism, music therapist, composing, events management, festival organisation and stage management.

Entry requirements

Students must have achieved a grade 6 or above at GCSE and have theoretical skills equivalent to grade 5 or above and performance skills of grade 4 or above. It is a requirement of the course that students are having lessons on their specialist instrument, whether in school or privately. A-level students are expected to participate fully in the extracurricular programme offered by the music department. Students need to be open minded to a wide range of musical genres, particularly for the appraising component but also in composing and performing tasks.



PHOTOGRAPHY

Syllabus title:
Photography

Examination board:
AQA

A-level

Unit 1	Portfolio unit supported by 1,000-3,000 words	60% of A-level
Unit 2	Practical examination	15 hrs 40% of A-level

Studying A-level photography

The course is structured similarly to GCSE art. It revolves around units of coursework and controlled tests set against four assessment objectives. As with GCSE art, much of the practical work is triggered by critical studies with written research acting as a diary of work undertaken. Students will respond to a range of stimuli including natural form, landscape and portraiture. Students will also have the opportunity to develop more conceptual approaches to this medium. Candidates must have their own digital camera. A knowledge of Adobe Photoshop® is useful but not absolutely essential. All work will be internally

marked and moderated by AQA. The controlled test in Year 12 should be seen as an opportunity for developing ideas and in Year 13 to develop a more fully realised project.

Entry requirements

Students should have achieved a grade 6 in GCSE art. Students must demonstrate some proficiency in their use of written English, especially helpful at A-level. In some cases candidates with a grade 5 may be considered. Students who have not undertaken GCSE art will be asked to show a portfolio of photographs taken.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Syllabus title:

Physical education

Examination board:

OCR

A-level					
Component 1	Physiological Factors Affecting Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applied A&P • Ex physiology • Biomechanics 	90	2hr	30%
Component 2	Psychological Factors Affecting Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skill acquisition • Sports psychology 	60	1hr	20%
Component 3	Socio-cultural Issues in Physical Activity and Sport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sports & society • Contemporary issues in physical activity & sport 	60	1hr	20%
Component 4	Performance in Physical Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance coaching • Evaluation of performance for improvement 	60	NEA	30%

Studying A-level physical education

The course provides progression from GCSE and a sound foundation for study in higher education. A-level PE is becoming an essential qualification for higher education in physical education and sports studies. The course provides an excellent foundation for students intending to pursue careers in teaching and coaching, the leisure industry, recreational management, the health and fitness industry and professional sport.

Entry requirements

Students will normally be expected to have GCSE grade 6 or above in PE and a grade 5 in science. Those who have not studied GCSE PE will be considered if they have reached a high standard in one sport.



PHYSICS

Syllabus title:

Physics

Examination board:

Edexcel

A-level		
Paper 1	Further Mechanics Electric and Magnetic Fields Nuclear and Particle Physics	30%
Paper 2	Thermodynamics Space Nuclear Radiation Gravitational Fields Oscillations	30%
Paper 3	General Paper Experimental Methods	40%

Studying A-level physics

Since September 2015 we have been following the Edexcel physics specification which is designed to inspire you. Year 12 will give you a firm foundation of skills and in the second year you will be set free to explore the 'Wonders of the Universe' as we take a look at the vastness of space and then consider the minute particles that make everything work. The course will develop your fascination and enthusiasm for physics, and will equip you for a range of prestigious courses and careers. The course is content led allowing lessons to be challenging as well as engaging. Content is laid out clearly in a series of teaching modules, as listed above. At the start of the course there will be an emphasis on communication and calculation skills required to make the transition from GCSE to A-level as smooth as possible. Although practical work will form a considerable part of the course, there is no assessed coursework component.

Entry requirements

Students wishing to take physics should have a grade 6 or above in physics or combined science and a grade 6 in maths. We strongly recommend combining this course with maths.

POLITICS

Syllabus title:

Government and politics

Examination board:

Edexcel

A-level

Component 1: UK Politics and Core Political Ideas

Component 2: UK Government and Optional Political Ideas

Component 3: Comparative Politics

Studying A-level government and politics

Government and politics is a well-respected A-level course because it offers a sound intellectual base for those wanting to study the arts, humanities or social sciences at university. Furthermore the skills covered, such as analysis and communication, are attractive to employers. On a broader level the subject encourages students to be aware of their role in society and their rights and responsibilities as citizens.

In Year 12 the course focuses on British politics. Students will study how the UK is governed and in particular will focus on the role of key institutions such as parliament and key roles such as the prime minister. This will obviously necessitate an approach whereby the students will have to apply theory to actual experience. Therefore we will study recent political history particularly focusing

on politics since the 1970s. Students will also study politics from the bottom up, looking at the role of ordinary people in the political process. In Year 13 the course will focus on the development of political ideas and how these ideas have affected modern politics.

Entry requirements

Many students will not have studied politics before. However, it is clearly desirable that you have an interest in politics and current affairs. If you are the sort of person who enjoys keeping up with topical issues then this might be the course for you. The course is open to all students who achieve a grade 6 or higher in English or any other relevant humanity subject.

PRODUCT DESIGN

Syllabus title:

Design and Technology: Product Design

Examination board:

AQA

A-level

Paper 1	Written paper	2.5 hrs	30% of A-level
Paper 2	Written paper	1.5 hrs	20% of A-level
	Non examined assessment (NEA)	45 hrs	50% of A-level

Studying A-level product design

The world we live in is becoming steadily more complex and technologically advanced. Users increasingly demand that everyday products be attractive and easy to use. The role of the product designer is gaining increasing importance as innovation and new technologies become more significant in the design process.

A-level product design looks at the transformation of ideas into successful products matched to the needs of the user and the market place. You will analyse a range of commercial products during the course and comment on their aesthetics, functionality, ease of use and how well they perform their intended role. Product design at Balcarras closely follows the work undertaken in product design courses at university.

The coursework component will give you the opportunity to use your creativity and imagination to design and manufacture solutions to problems that you have identified, problems that have not already been solved countless times by others. It is important to emphasise that you will not only be judged by the finished results but also by how you respond to the design process. In a creative process you will be expected to experiment with different constructions, materials, components and production methods in new combinations. Above all, there is an emphasis on innovation and new thinking. Eventually, you will produce functioning and aesthetically attractive solutions, based upon how people use, and interact with, the product.

In addition to developing your designing and making skills, you will begin to consider the role and responsibilities of the professional product designer. This will involve developing an understanding of customer needs, concept generation and design for manufacture, both at an industrial level and within the school workshop. During the course you will consider contemporary and developing technologies and materials, and how they impact on the products we use

everyday. The professional product designer works closely with industry and with the market and must be well acquainted with industrial working methods, the course is therefore multi-disciplinary - both artistic and technical in character.

The computer is a powerful and essential tool for the product designer. During the course, you will be introduced to specialist equipment, including sublimation printers, a laser cutter and rapid prototyping machines. You will be expected to submit your coursework in the form of an electronic portfolio (e-portfolio).

Entry requirements

Students should, ideally, have achieved a grade 6, or higher, at GCSE level in a technology subject. However grade 5 will be considered on an individual basis.

PSYCHOLOGY

Syllabus title:

Psychology

Examination board:

AQA

A-level

Paper 1: Introductory Topics in Psychology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Influence • Memory • Attachment • Psychopathology 	2 hr written exam	96 marks	33.3% of A-level	Four compulsory sections all requiring written answers
Paper 2: Psychology in Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approaches in Psychology • Biopsychology • Research Methods 	2 hr written exam	96 marks	33.3% of A-level	Three compulsory sections all requiring written answers
Paper 3: Issues and Options in Psychology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issues and Debates in Psychology • One from: Relationships; Gender; Cognition and Development • One from: Schizophrenia; Eating Behaviour; Stress • One from: Aggression; Forensic Psychology; Addiction 	2 hr written exam	96 marks	33.3% of A-level	One compulsory section. Three sections each offering a choice of three topics. Students answer one question from each section

Studying A-level psychology

Psychology is defined as "the science of mind and behaviour". When you begin to study this subject, you will be able to understand the reasons why people behave in the way that they do, and evaluate different theoretical perspectives in order to explain the behaviour.

The topics you will study are broad; the course ranges from social influence and biopsychology in Year 12 to forensic psychology at A-level.

During the course you will be expected to make presentations, debate from a particular perspective, scrutinise data and write both short and extended responses to questions.

Psychology can lead to careers in areas including social work, occupational psychology, teaching, marketing, personnel, nursing and care.

Entry requirements

Successful A-level psychology students need to have excellent communication skills and be confident using numbers.



RELIGION, PHILOSOPHY AND ETHICS

Syllabus title:

Religious Studies

Examination board:

OCR 100% Essay exam

A-level

Paper 1:	Philosophy	33% of grade
Paper 2:	Ethics	33% of grade
Paper 3:	Theology	33% of grade

Studying A-level religion, philosophy and ethics

Religious studies at A-level is a philosophy, ethics and theology course which allows you to ask some of the big questions in life. Is there a God? How did the universe come about? What is right and wrong? Why does pain and suffering exist? Do miracles really happen?

During this challenging course, you will develop your knowledge and understanding of a variety of philosophical arguments, ethical theories and religious ideas as well considering your own interpretations. The course covers the work of the great philosophers such as Plato, Kant, Aquinas and Descartes to more modern philosophical works. You will also be covering ethical theories and applied ethics, covering such topics as euthanasia and business ethics. As well as this you will also extend your understanding of the Christianity through the theology aspects of the course, considering its influence and history as well as the place that it has in today's world. You will develop research and analytical skills, as well as logical thinking skills and the use of reasoned argument. You need to be prepared to question, think, criticise, analyse and take on board a wide range of ideas and opinions.

Philosophy, ethics and theology combines well with almost all other humanities subjects such as history and geography, but it is important to note that it is also an excellent choice with science and maths based subjects. Indeed, in many universities, you will find that philosophy is an option on science degree courses. This subject is highly regarded by universities due to the rigour and academic nature of the content and the essay writing skills you will be required to obtain.

Entry requirements

Successful A-level religion, philosophy and ethics students need to have strong communication skills and essay writing ability. Assessment will be through written responses in the form of essays, so a love of writing analytical and considered approaches is a must. There are no prior knowledge requirements for this A-level subject.

RUSSIAN

Syllabus title:

Russian

Examination board:

Edexcel

A-level

Paper 1	Listening, Reading and Translation	40% of A-level
Paper 2	Written Response to Works and Translation	30% of A-level
Paper 3	Speaking	30% of A-level

Studying A-level Russian

A-level Russian builds on the skills of listening, reading, writing and speaking which you have developed during your GCSE course. It will extend your knowledge of Russian culture and history as you study a range of topics including 'traditions and festivals', 'political and artistic culture in the Russian-speaking world' and 'the final years of the USSR'. The A-level course also involves the study of a literary text and film as you develop your exposure to authentic materials.

We use a range of up-to-date sources such as on-line articles, newspapers and video clips, as well as conventional text books. You will be encouraged to make use of such resources independently to develop your comprehension skills and vocabulary. You will also have the opportunity to participate in a visit to Russia and take part in theatre visits and other cultural activities relating to the course.

Throughout the A-level course you will also develop your understanding of grammatical concepts as you learn how the language works in order to produce

accurate written and spoken Russian. You will learn how to use Russian in everyday situations as well as in formal discussion and debate. Weekly one-to-one conversation classes with a native speaker form an integral part of the course and enable you to develop confidence with both speaking and listening.

The course will interest students who are curious about life in Russia and want to equip themselves with language and communication skills that are increasingly important in the global market. This course can lead onto the study of Russian or another language at university. The A-level Russian course will also give you the opportunity to learn and apply important transferable skills in critical thinking and analysis, which are highly valued by both universities and future employers.

Entry requirements

Students should have achieved at least grade 6 at GCSE level in Russian.

SPANISH

Syllabus title:

Spanish

Examination board:

AQA

A-level

Paper 1	Listening, Reading & Writing	50% of A-level
Paper 2	Writing	20% of A-level
Paper 3	Speaking	30% of A-level

Studying A-level Spanish

A-level Spanish builds upon the skills of listening, reading, writing and speaking which you have developed during your GCSE course. You will not only extend your knowledge and understanding of Spain and Spanish life and culture but also of other Spanish speaking countries of the world as well. In addition, a good grasp of grammatical concepts will become increasingly important as you learn how the language works in order to produce accurate written and spoken Spanish.

We use a range of up-to-date sources such as the internet, radio and television as well as conventional textbooks. Students will also be encouraged to make use of such resources independently. You will learn how to use Spanish in everyday conversation as well as in formal discussion and debate. A Spanish Assistant is employed so that students can have one-to-one speaking sessions for half an hour per week. These sessions are obligatory and form an important part of the course.

You will gain a clearer insight into how language works and you will have the opportunity to visit Spain and to take part in other cultural activities. The course will interest students who are curious about life in other countries and want to equip themselves with the language skills that are essential in the international business environment and also highly valued by academic institutions.

Entry requirements

Students should have achieved at least a grade 6 at GCSE-level in Spanish.



TEXTILES

Syllabus title:

Art and Design (Textile design)

Examination board:

AQA

A-level

Unit 1	Personal Investigation	No time limit	96 marks	60% of A-level
Unit 2	Externally Set Assignment	Supervised 15 hrs	96 marks	40% of A-level

Studying A-level textiles

Textiles have always been an integral part of society and commerce, touching our lives every day. This subject can lead on to design or art courses and is a wonderful chance to explore the properties and possibilities of fabrics and related media. Textile design can be as diverse as a fabric surface design, an innovative piece of clothing, a piece of body adornment or a 3D sculpture.

At A-level you will have the chance to design new and innovative fabrics and products using a wide range of materials and techniques. In Year 13 you will build on your acquired skills and knowledge, producing one challenging and self-motivated investigation with supporting practical work.

Topics covered by this course will include: the working properties and manipulation of materials; colour and pattern application techniques; pattern drafting; sketchbook and portfolio presentation and aspects of design and illustration. During the course you will be expected to be able to work independently producing quality work and to keep fully up to date with new developments and issues relating to textiles.

Entry requirements

At GCSE level a 6 or higher, in art, textiles or appropriate technology subject. It would be an advantage if you are experienced using a sewing machine.

A black and white photograph of several students sitting at a long desk in a computer lab, focused on their work. They are using keyboards and mice. The image is partially obscured by text overlays.

EXTENDED PROJECT QUALIFICATION

Syllabus title:
Extended Project

Examination board:
AQA

Completing the extended project qualification

The Extended Project is a Level 3 qualification and is intended to stretch and challenge students beyond their A-level choices; it is therefore highly regarded by universities and employers alike.

The EPQ allows each student to embark on a self-motivated and largely independent project. The students have freedom of choice over their project's title, subject to approval by the course coordinators, and the direction of its completion; our students find this highly rewarding.

The project topic is chosen entirely by the student and can take the form of an extended research based 5000 word report or an artefact with a research based 1000 word report. The artefact could encompass; planning and teaching a lesson, a performance, a sculpture or many other formats. All students at Balcarras sixth form begin their EPQ journey at the start of year 12 and most will have completed the qualification by the first half term of year 13. AQA encourages students' curiosity and creativity, and each year we are impressed by the huge range of inspiring and interesting ideas that the students come up with. Further to this, the freedom of the course enables students to develop their time management and organisational skills whilst the taught element provides students with vital skills such as referencing and source reviewing which prepares them for academic writing at university level.

Through the delivery of taught elements and through supervisor meetings teachers impart to students the key management and planning skills necessary for the completion of the project, and supervise and monitor students' progress. The EPQ involves extended autonomous work by the student. A supervisor will be assigned to each student and regular meetings will take place to advise and guide them through the process.

The EPQ is an extremely valuable course, preparing students for the challenge and rigour of university study or working life. In addition, an increasing number of universities are including the EPQ in their offers to students. Consequently some students have secured their preferred university through achieving an A in EPQ.

Students are required, with appropriate supervision, to:

- choose an area of interest
- draft a title and aims of the project for formal approval by the centre
- plan, research and carry out the project
- deliver a presentation to a non-specialist audience
- provide evidence of all stages of project development and production for assessment in the form of a log.

The Extended Project will develop and extend from one or more of the student's study areas and/or from an area of personal interest or activity outside their main programme of study.

Entry requirements

All year 12 students follow this course and have a timetabled lesson each week.

HOW TO APPLY

Making your choices

You must choose FOUR courses for which you wish to apply. Please read page 6 for guidance on combining courses.

Do not worry if you are unsure about your choices – you are not necessarily making a firm commitment at this stage.

However, your choice does have two important influences on our planning. First, choosing a course makes it more likely to run. Decisions on course will be made in April. Secondly, we will try to make sure that your chosen combination of courses is possible i.e. that they are not timetables at the same time. This will be more difficult to ensure if you change your mind later on.

Application form

An application form is downloadable from our website www.balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk on the sixth form/admissions page.

Please complete the form and email to sixthformapplications@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk. You will receive an acknowledgement by return.

If you are unable to complete an application form online or have any queries please email Ms Taylor, Sixth Form Administrator on It@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk or telephone 01242 545118.

You will need to fill it in carefully. We will use it as the basis for your course consultation meeting. In particular, we will discuss whether your choices are consistent with your career or academic intentions. For students from other schools we will contact your current school for a reference.

No decisions will be made on the basis of the application alone, but it will form the basis for discussion at the consultation meeting.

Deadline

Applications should be submitted by 24th February. You may submit your application as soon as you wish.

Course consultation meeting

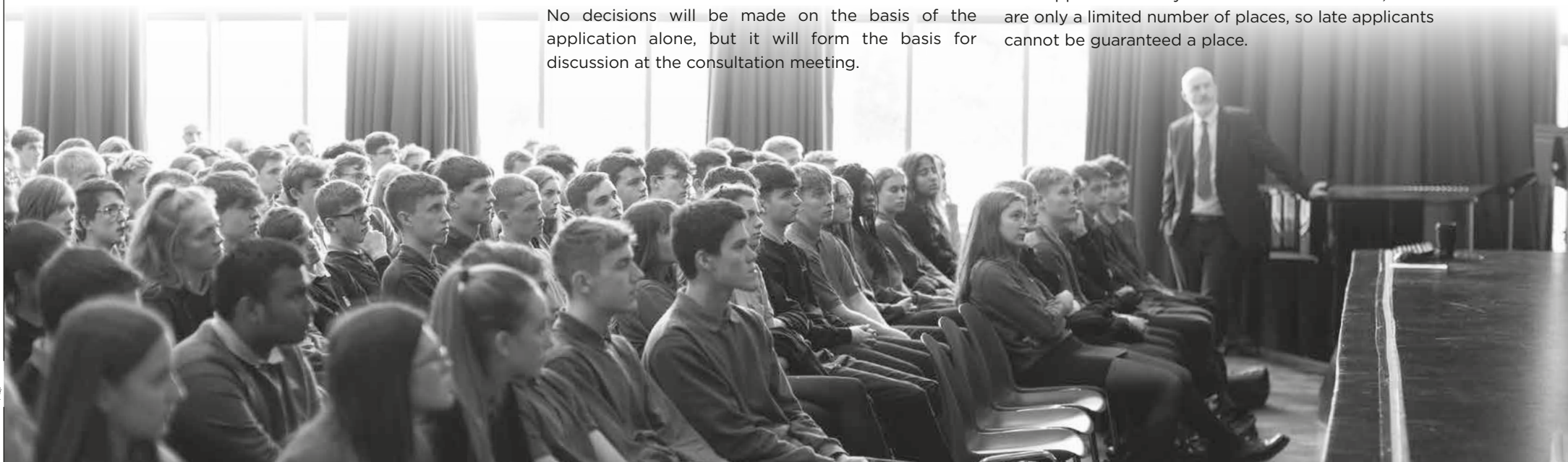
Consulations will take place between February and April. Parents are welcome to join students for these. The meetings will be a chance for you to ask questions and clarify options. Confirmation of places will follow these consultations for successful applicants.

Offers of places

Where an offer of a place in Balcarras Sixth Form is made, conditions are likely to be on the basis of GCSE grades.

Late applicants

Late applications may be considered. However, there are only a limited number of places, so late applicants cannot be guaranteed a place.





Martha Peace

(Year 11 Balcarras)

AS: AAB, Dist*

Plans: a gap year and then Business Management at university

After thoroughly enjoying my time at Balcarras since Year 7, I knew that this sixth form was right for me to continue my studies at A-level. The positive environment I experienced here solidified my choice, and I hadn't considered going elsewhere. The transition from Year 11 was very smooth due to the friendly nature of the teachers and other students, and this made it easier to settle in. Not being sure what I would like to do in the future, being given the opportunity to study four subjects in Year 12 was ideal, and very beneficial for my learning. Here, not only are the teachers passionate about their subjects but they are also extremely supportive, helping you to reach your full potential. Balcarras has also provided many opportunities for me to further my learning and help me to make decisions for the future, such as talks from various universities, a careers fair, and work experience placements. Studying at Balcarras, I feel more confident in my ability to achieve good grades due to the strong work ethic and excellent facilities provided, particularly the independent study room. Ultimately, choosing Balcarras for my post-16 education was the right decision, as I am truly enjoying my time here, and have developed, not only academically, but as an individual too. My skills have been strengthened by the incredible amount of opportunities and support I have received, and the school has been outstanding in encouraging me to explore numerous career paths. I feel well prepared and excited for post A-level and university life, thanks to the assuring atmosphere at Balcarras.

After sixth form I plan on taking a gap year before going to study business management and marketing at university hopefully.



George Oliver

(Year 11 Balcarras)

AS: AAAA

Plans: to study English and History at university

I previously attended Balcarras from Year 7 to Year 11, and the standard of teaching was always excellent. This has continued into my A-level studies and I am currently studying art, English Literature, and history. I have found that creative and academic subjects are both valued by staff. The facilities for studying art are very good and open for students during study hours. Taking four subjects at AS-level allowed me to continue my interest in drama, as has the unrivalled school production which allows students to socialise across year groups and is always the best part of my year. All my teachers are supportive and kind, and they find a balance between engaging learning and preparing us for our exams. Teachers often go beyond their roles, actively helping students with extra- and super-curricular activities. The sixth form team is approachable and always available to help students. A strong work ethic is encouraged and the facilities for independent study make this achievable. Students are allowed more independence and take more responsibility. There is a focus on preparing students for their post-sixth form aspirations throughout both years and this has made me confident in my UCAS application.



Henry Tucker

(Year 11 Balcarras)

AS: AAAA

Plans: to do an Apprenticeship in Mechanical Engineering

Ever since I joined Balcarras in Year 7, I really wanted to join the sixth form, this was because I knew the school would give me the best chance to succeed in my chosen STEM subjects. A part of the school that I particularly love is the teachers' willingness to help you outside of lesson time. You can always find your teachers in a study period, and they're more than happy to help you with some topics that you are finding difficult independently, this means you are never left to struggle through something on your own. Also, I love how lessons are always taught so that you actually understand the subject and can develop an interest in it, rather than memorising information just to pass an exam; I feel that this prepares us for further education really well. When looking at potential post sixth form options, such as universities and apprenticeships, there is a lot of support in finding these places from teachers and the careers department. I have found this particularly useful to find apprenticeships in engineering. Overall, there is a great sense of freedom for students and choice to study in your own way, rather than a structured format that you must follow, which I really value.



Gemma Veal

(Year 11 Balcarras)

AS: AAAA

Plans: to have a gap year then study English and Drama at university

Having been at Balcarras since Year 7, I decided to stay on at sixth form because it's a lovely school with a high standard of teaching. I chose to take English Literature, drama and philosophy and ethics because they were my favourite subjects at GCSE and they work well together. I have chosen to do an EPQ on a comparison of literature and it has given me more confidence in writing long essays. When I joined the sixth form, I took part in the Bar Mock trial and the Boost programme, which involved a mock court trial and a visit to university of Oxford. Both are well worth being involved in because they give you an insight into different pathways. My favourite part of the school year is the annual drama production. It is always a blast to be involved in and I have made some of my closest friends through it! The music department has given me a breadth of fun and musical experience over the years through the choir, music groups and their many concerts. One of my best memories is performing at the Cheltenham jazz festival as part of Balcarras. As a member of the sixth form, I really appreciated the opportunity to be a part of organising and arranging the House Music competition for one of the teams. Other highlights from my time at sixth form have to be the debate competition where tutor groups go head to head on diverse and hot topics, battling it out in knock out rounds. Moving forward from Balcarras, I'm planning to take a gap year to gain some life skills through work and travel. I hope to head to university to study English and drama and possibly go on to do teacher training to hopefully inspire students in their studies as my teachers here have done for me. I will miss my time at Balcarras but I am excited about the future ahead.

Balcarras Sixth Form

2021



B6th
FORM

for more information contact:

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